

June 7, 2002

To the Honorable Chairman  
of the Board of Supervisors  
of the County of Milwaukee

We have completed an audit of the Department of Human Resources' (DHR) role in the hiring process. We reviewed over 200 files of recent position fills to determine the timeliness of the process. Also, to gauge the level of customer satisfaction regarding the hiring process and other services provided by the DHR, we surveyed all major County departments and received an 88 percent response rate. Finally, the report contains recommendations for both structural and procedural reforms designed to improve the customer focus of the DHR.

A management response from the DHR is included as Exhibit 5. We would like to thank the DHR staff and County managers for their cooperation in this review.

Please refer this report to the Committees on Finance and Audit and Personnel.

Jerome J. Heer  
Director of Audits

JJH/cah

cc: Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Scott Walker, County Executive  
Jertha Ramos-Colon, Acting Director, Department of Human Resources  
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# **An Audit of the Department of Human Resources' Role in the Hiring Process**

**June 2002**

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# **An Audit of the Department of Human Resources' Role in the Hiring Process**

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## Summary

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Hiring and promotional decisions based on qualifications and merit, rather than political patronage or nepotism, are the underlying principles guiding the development of most Civil Service regulations. In general, operating departments within governments are granted the authority to hire, while the responsibility for recruiting, screening applications and determining eligibility based on minimum requirements is entrusted with a Civil Service Commission (CSC). In Milwaukee County, department heads are ultimately responsible for hiring employees.

Milwaukee County is the only one of Wisconsin's 72 counties required to formulate and implement Civil Service Rules. While some Milwaukee County positions are required by State Statutes to be filled by appointment, all others are subject to the Civil Service Rules. Additionally, in all personnel matters, the County must adhere to federal regulations concerning Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contracts with various labor unions also factor into the process of filling positions. Milwaukee County has additional requirements regarding minority workforce representation in connection with a legally binding 1980 consent decree.

### **Timeliness of DHR's Role in Hiring**

We obtained information from the Department of Human Resources (DHR) indicating that a total of 2,526 employees were hired by the County during the first six months of 2001.

A statistically valid random sample of 212, with a confidence level of 95% and an expected error rate of plus or minus 5% was selected. These 212 files were separated into the following categories

- AB306 (Appointment of a Named County Employee)
- List already available
- No list available
- Pending exam
- Continuous recruitment

It is not unusual for departments to request a number of certified lists before obtaining the list containing the person ultimately hired. For purposes of our analysis, we focused on the certified list that contained the candidate that was ultimately hired.

Our sample of 212 position fills showed that the Milwaukee County hiring process involves a timeframe that is unacceptable. Even under the most favorable of circumstances—when a department requests to appoint a named County employee to a position (AB306)—the process takes more than a month. When a certified list is available, which should mean that the hiring department has a pool of candidates immediately available from which to draw, it takes more than five months. When a list is not available or when an exam is pending, the process takes more than six months. Positions on continuous recruitment took an average of 145 calendar days, or about five months, to fill.

In contrast, a 2000—2001 survey of government personnel departments conducted by the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) provides the following data.

- When a certified list is available, 69% of respondents are able to provide departments a list within six calendar days. Just 1% takes more than 60 calendar days when a list is available.
- When a list is not available, 69% of respondents are able to provide a list within 40 calendar days. Thirteen percent take more than 60 days when no list is available.

We reviewed the history of 1,206 candidates on certified lists for positions filled by Milwaukee County in 2001. Our analysis shows that the percentage of candidates appointed (as a percentage of the total names on the certified lists for various time periods) decreases steadily after six months on the list. In addition, as expected, those who were not interested and those unable to be contacted increased over time. The largest increase in ‘not interested’ occurred after six months, while the largest increase in ‘unable to contact’ occurred after the second year. This is indicative of a very inefficient process, and as the data shows, the process becomes less efficient as time goes by. Further, the data shows that 78% of all the candidates in our sample that were eventually hired were hired within one year of their placement on a certified list.

### **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results**

As an internal service department, it is important that DHR assist its customers (i.e., other County departments) in meeting their needs and in achieving their strategic goals.

To gauge the level of customer satisfaction regarding the hiring process and other services provided by DHR, as well as to obtain insight into factors contributing to the lengthy hiring process, we surveyed all major County departments. Taken in their entirety, results from our departmental surveys indicate recognition of individual courtesy and professionalism among DHR staff, but dissatisfaction with bottom-line results concerning meeting departments' hiring needs. From scores and comments, it appears departments are frustrated with a cumbersome process and a general focus on process over customer needs.

Survey results are summarized in **Section 2** of this report and appear in their entirety as **Exhibits 2, 3 and 4**.

### **Civil Service Reform**

In light of recent turnover in the County Executive's Office and key administrative positions, Milwaukee County government as a whole is at a crossroads. The current budget crisis creates additional constraints on County services and pressure to reshape local government. Crisis is never the desired state of affairs but when traditional solutions are not an option, innovative solutions must be found. As pointed out in the work described in this report, it is clear that DHR must make changes to improve its customer focus and help departments accomplish their business objectives. Examples of successful civil service reform efforts are presented in **Section 3** of this report.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is essential that DHR develop a human resources strategy that attracts and retains qualified candidates in a competitive labor market and that is responsive to individual departments' needs. Efficient, purposeful processes must be developed to facilitate this strategy and to replace the cumbersome hiring process currently in place. It can be argued that departments, faced with an inefficient and time consuming civil service hiring process, will use every legal means available to 'work around' that process. This could explain what some observers consider an inappropriately high incidence of Temporary Appointments, Emergency Appointments, Temporary Appointments to a Higher Classification and AB306's (Appointment of a Named County Employee). Once a human resources strategy is adopted, it has to be communicated and tailored to best serve the various departments.

**Section 4** of this report contains specific recommendations for both structural and procedural reforms designed to improve the customer focus of DHR and to reduce the unacceptable timeframe currently experienced by departments filling a vacant position in Milwaukee County government.

We appreciate the cooperation extended by the Department of Human Resources. A management response to recommendations contained in this report is included as **Exhibit 5**.

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## Background

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Hiring and promotional decisions based on qualifications and merit, rather than political patronage or nepotism, are the underlying principles guiding the development of most Civil Service regulations. In general, operating departments within governments are granted the authority to hire, while the responsibility for recruiting, screening applications and determining eligibility based on minimum requirements is entrusted with a Civil Service Commission (CSC). Since its inception in 1883, the federal Civil Service Act has been modified and updated. However, the principle of merit-based personnel decisions at all levels of government has not changed.

Milwaukee County is the only one of Wisconsin's 72 counties required to formulate and implement Civil Service Rules. While some Milwaukee County positions are required by State Statutes to be filled by appointment, all others are subject to the Civil Service Rules. Additionally, in all personnel matters, the County must adhere to federal regulations concerning Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Contracts with various labor unions also factor into the process of filling positions. Milwaukee County has additional requirements regarding minority workforce representation in connection with a legally binding 1980 consent decree.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR), through the Employment and Staffing Division, administers and monitors employee selection processes for all positions in the classified service. DHR reports to the Personnel Committee of the County Board and to the Civil Service Commission. The Personnel Committee is part of the established process for approving civil service rule changes. The Civil Service Commission provides administrative control over the merit system, including the promulgation of rules. It also serves as an adjudicating body, conducting hearings on merit system violations and appeals of actions taken by the Director of Human Resources.

The major activities of the Employment and Staffing Division that relate to hiring are processing certification requests, certifying candidates, receiving applications and testing applicants. Activity levels as reported in the 2002 Adopted Budget are shown in **Table 1**.



**Table 1**  
**Milwaukee County Department of Human Resources**  
**Employment and Staffing Division Activities**

	<b><u>2000</u></b> <b><u>Actual</u></b>	<b><u>2001</u></b> <b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>2002</u></b> <b><u>Budget</u></b>
Applications Received	14,682	13,000	14,000
Exams Announced	53	75	50
Individuals Tested	1,987	1,100	1,900
Certification Requests Processed	955	1,000	1,000
Candidates Certified	24,916	22,000	24,000

Source: 2002 Adopted Budget.

The 2002 Adopted Budget for the Employment and Staffing Division calls for expenditure of approximately \$1 million. As of May 2002, there were 15 staff employed within the division.

Employees in Milwaukee County, excluding elected officials, are of two types:

- **Classified**—These are Civil Service employees. They represent the largest group of employees and make up approximately 95% of the workforce. Classified employees may or may not be represented by a union. Unions represent approximately 80% of Milwaukee County employees with AFSCME District Council 48 representing the majority.
- **Exempt**—Comprised primarily of higher level management. For example, department directors and deputy directors. Exempt positions are not represented by a union and are considered ‘at will employees,’ meaning they serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority and may be discharged at will. Typically they are not hired through the DHR process although the hiring department can request DHR’s assistance.

**Table 2** provides two separate breakouts of the County workforce as of October 18, 2001.

**Table 2**  
**Number of County Employees**  
**As of 10/18/01**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>	<u>Percentage of Total</u>
Exempt	414	5.9%
Classified	6,617	94.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,031</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Non-Represented	1,602	22.8%
Represented	5,429	77.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,031</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Department of Human Resources

In most cases, the department head is the hiring authority, although that authority may be delegated to someone else in the organization. For example, the department head may delegate authority to division administrators or section managers. It is the responsibility of hiring authorities to notify DHR of any position vacancies they wish to fill. DHR is responsible for recruiting, testing and certifying applicants as meeting the minimum qualifications for a position and providing a list of certified candidates to departments, from which the hire must be made. DHR does not hire employees.

Currently, there are a number of procedural steps taken by DHR upon receiving a departmental request to fill a position. The request is reviewed by:

- DHR's Compensation Division. This review is undertaken to verify that a position is authorized and funded and that the proper wage scale is applied.
- DHR's Return to Work Coordinator. This review is to determine if there is a candidate for the position from those employees injured on the job that can work but cannot return to their previous position.
- DHR's Employment Relations Coordinator. This review is to help ensure compliance with the 1980 consent decree relating to a variety of issues affecting minority representation in the County workforce.
- DHR's Employment and Staffing Manager. This review is to determine if there may be someone on a layoff/placement list that is eligible for the position.

In addition, under emergency procedures authorized by the County Board effective August 1, 2001 and later extended throughout 2002, each request must be reviewed and recommended as a

'critical fill' by the Department of Administration for approval by the County Board. Positions at the Airport and a few positions in public safety have been exempt from this additional review.

Positions that are difficult to fill or that experience high turnover are identified for continuous recruitment. Examples of positions on continuous recruitment include deputy sheriffs and correction officers. In general, departments are limited by Civil Service Rules to a list containing the names of just ten certified candidates for a single vacant position recruitment, and two additional names for each additional vacancy. These limits are designed to ensure that the top scoring candidates have the first chance to be hired. Therefore, when a position is on continuous recruitment, DHR determines how many certified names are available to a department at the time of a request. If the department has less than the allowable number of names, additional names are provided by DHR whenever exams are given. For certain positions for which recruitment is particularly difficult, departments have requested, and been granted, exceptions to these Civil Service restrictions.

If a department requests to fill a position with an available certified list, a Human Resources Detail Assistant (Certifications) prints out a list of all candidates qualified for the position from a database in order of test scores with the highest test score appearing first. The list is then screened by the DHR staff person to eliminate applicants who are not interested in this particular position for any of a variety of reasons, such as the job's location or the shift assignment. If this position has been designated a 'minority fill' by DHR's Employment Relations Division, for purposes of compliance with the 1980 consent decree, only minority candidates will be referred. When the proper number of names has been identified (generally ten for a single vacancy), the names are added to any candidates that may appear on three separate eligibility lists. These eligibility lists are a transfer list (existing County employees in the same or similar job classifications who have requested transfers), the reinstatement list (former County employees laid off from the same or similar positions) and the DECA (Disabled Expanded Certification Appointment) list. This combination of names is the certified list of eligible candidates sent to the hiring authority.

The exception to this procedure occurs when a position is considered non-competitive. Typical examples of non-competitive positions are those involving a specific certification, such as positions in the fields of nursing or civil engineering. In such cases, all candidates who meet the minimum requirements receive the same score and all names are referred to the hiring authority. With a list available, names can be sent to the department within a shorter period of time.

If a list is not available for a non-competitive position vacancy, DHR will try to identify a comparable list to use to fill the position. For example, a Clerk II list may be used to fill Mail Clerk II positions, since the minimum qualifications are similar. This is done to get a list to the department as quickly as possible.

If there are no comparable lists, an exam must be given. The department's request to fill a position is given to a Human Resources Analyst to update the position description. Both the requesting department and DHR must agree on a position description, position announcement and testing process. Tests may be traditional paper-and-pencil tests, an oral exam or a review of experience and qualifications. Departments are asked for their input, but DHR makes the final decision of the method and content of the tests. After the tests are scored, the analyst enters the information in a database, and the list can be generated by the previously described method.

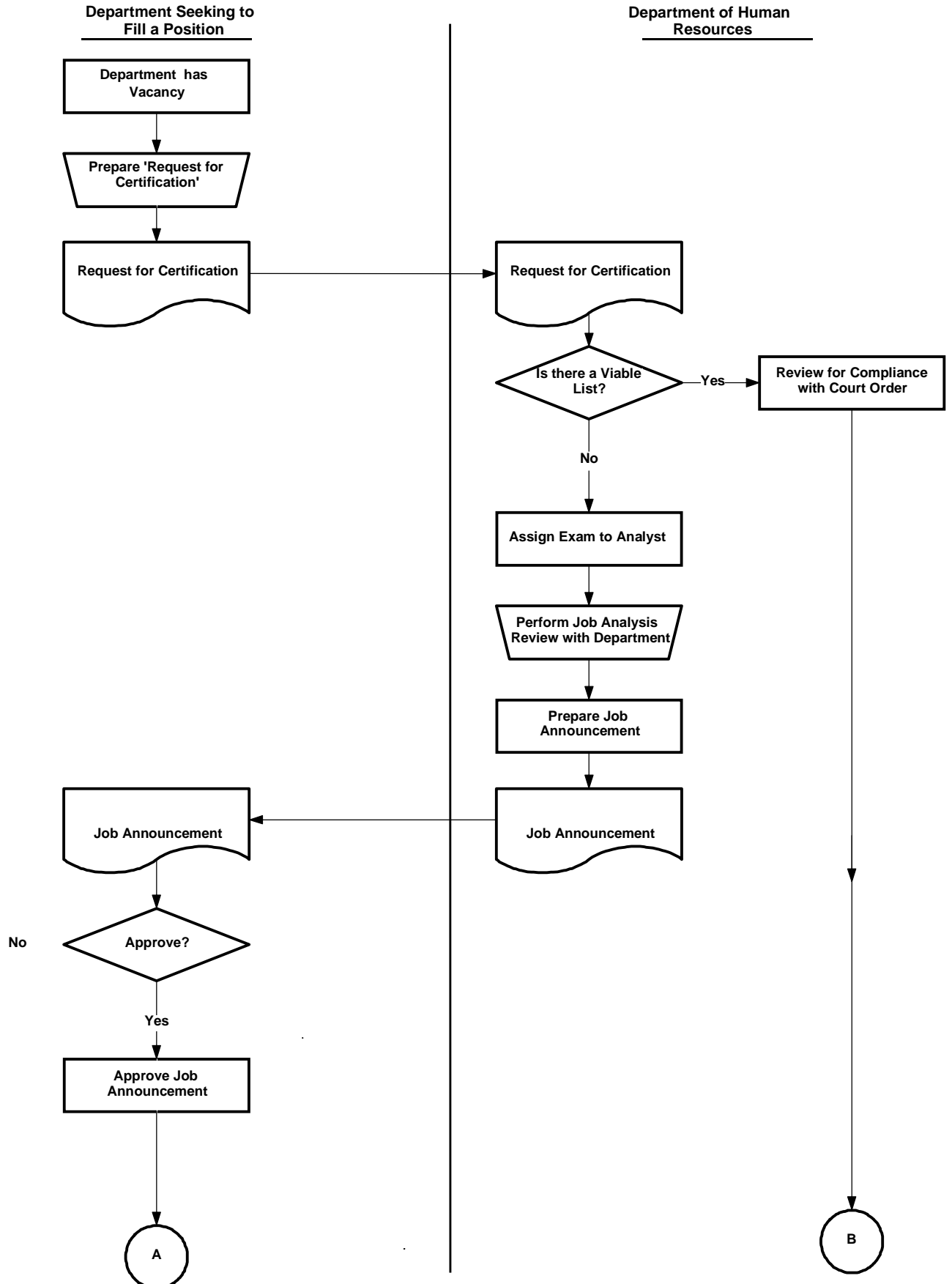
The County also hires a number of seasonal workers for the Parks Department and the Zoo, and to a lesser extent, the Department of Public Works. For the period January 1 to June 30, 2001, a total of 1,694 seasonal positions were filled. For seasonal hires, departments are authorized to hand out and receive applications. The applications are then sent to DHR for processing. This entails verifying the applicant's age and residency, as well as checking for a criminal background if the applicant indicated a history of charges or convictions. DHR compiles the list of eligible candidates and forwards it to the appropriate department.

Departments can take certain personnel actions without the standard DHR involvement, even though the positions involved are in the classified service. For example, one department has restructured some positions to create an internal career ladder. When an opening occurs at a higher level within the ladder, the department can promote any of the qualified candidates on the next lower level without requesting a list from DHR. Intra-departmental transfers also are processed using the departments' rules and are not processed through DHR.

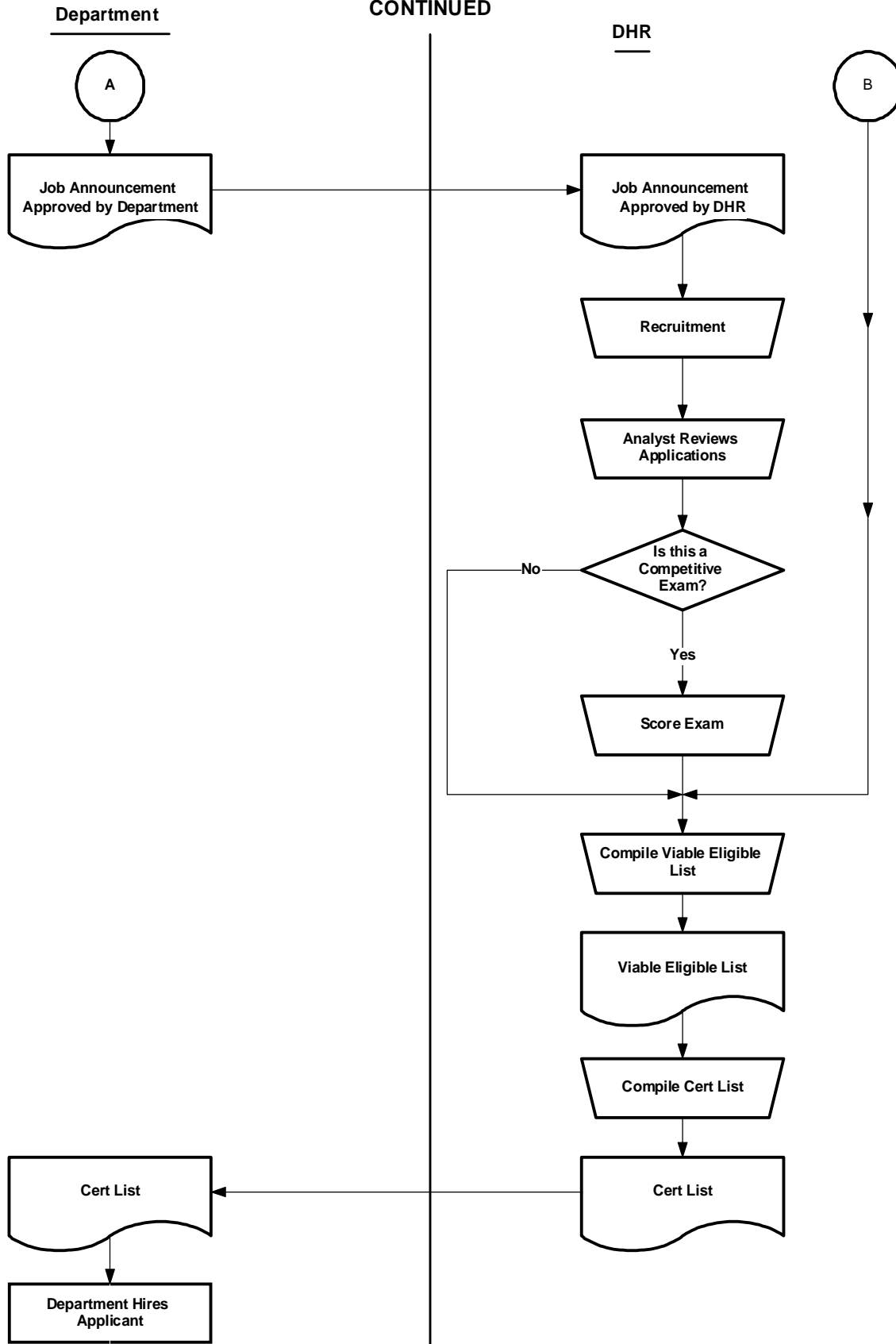
In some cases, the department knows whom they want to hire for a position. They are allowed to follow a process under Wisconsin State Statutes, ss. 63.05(1) to 'Appoint a Named County Employee' (also referred to as an AB306 for the Assembly Bill which authorized the procedure). This is done in limited cases only and DHR must ensure that named employees meet minimum position qualifications.

Following is a flow chart developed by the Department of Audit to illustrate the typical hiring process under Milwaukee County Civil Service Rules.

# MILWAUKEE COUNTY HIRING PROCESS



MILWAUKEE COUNTY HIRING PROCESS  
CONTINUED



SOURCE: Auditor Prepared Using County Data

Questions have been raised about the length of time necessary to fill a vacant position and the economy of Milwaukee County's human resources organizational structure. This structure includes both a centralized Department of Human Resources and decentralized human resources staff within many operating departments. These issues, as well as others identified in a customer satisfaction survey conducted by the Department of Audit regarding services provided by the Department of Human Resources, are discussed in the remaining sections of this report.



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## Section 1: Timeliness of Hiring Process

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**A key component of a successful recruitment and hiring process is the timeliness of the ultimate hire.**

While the Department of Human Resources provides a wide variety of services to County departments, one of the most important functions of DHR is facilitating the hiring of qualified personnel. A key component of a successful recruitment and hiring process is the timeliness of the ultimate hire.

### **Timeliness of Hiring**

As a starting point, we obtained information from DHR indicating that a total of 2,526 employees were hired by the County during the first six months of 2001. This time period was chosen to exclude the hiring freeze implemented in August 2001, which added the step of Department of Administration approval for all certification requests.

From this population of total hires, we eliminated certain categories of hires. For instance, we did not want to include seasonal employees in this sample or any hires that did not involve DHR, such as internal promotions or transfers. The results of this screening process are shown in **Table 3**.

**Table 3**  
**Milwaukee County Positions Filled**  
**January – June 2001**

Total hires from January 1, 2001 to June 30, 2001	2,526
Less: Seasonal Employees	1,694
Less: Exempt Employees (appointed)	33
Less: Hourly Emergency	12
Less: Hourly Exempt (Interns)	117
Less: Intradepartmental Transfer	131
Less: Same Department Promotion	68
Permanent hires with substantive DHR role	471

Source: DHR records.

A statistically valid random sample of 212, with a confidence level of 95% and an expected error rate of plus or minus 5% was selected. These 212 files were separated into the following categories

- AB306 (Appointment of a Named County Employee)
- List already available
- No list available
- Pending exam
- Continuous recruitment

**It is not unusual for departments to request a number of additional certified candidate names before obtaining a list containing the person ultimately hired.**

For purposes of our analysis, we focused on the certified list that contained the candidate that was ultimately hired. It is not unusual for departments to request a number of additional certified candidate names before obtaining a list containing the person ultimately hired.

For all positions except those labeled continuous recruitment, the following three key dates were collected.

- Date the hiring authority (County department) requested that the position be filled,
- Date the candidate ultimately hired appeared on a certified list sent to the hiring authority,
- Date the candidate was hired.

Subtracting the first date from the second provides the length of time between the request to fill a position and DHR's provision of a certified list that ultimately resulted in a hire. Our tested timeframe may include departments' own internal human resources processing time. As previously noted, there may have been a prior list or lists sent to the department, but in such cases the prior lists did not produce successful candidates in our sample. Other factors affecting this timeframe include such things as the inability to contact candidates on the list, loss of

interest or availability on the part of some candidates, and intervening departmental priorities.

Lists may also be held open by DHR for anticipated layoffs, return to work issues and the court ordered consent decree regarding minority hires. Also, a list could be held pending Department of Administration approval during County-wide hiring freezes.

Continuing our analysis, subtracting the second date from the third shows the length of time between the hiring authority's receipt of the certified list and the official hire date of the new employee. Factors affecting this timeframe may include such things as DHR background checks, a drug test or physical exam required for some positions, interviewing and the availability of the candidate to begin County employment.

For those positions on continuous recruitment, the ongoing nature of these recruiting efforts made it difficult to match the initial request dates with the proper certification lists. The results, in calendar days, are shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4**  
**Average Time to Fill a Vacant Position**  
**(In Calendar Days)**

	<u>Request/ Certification List</u>	<u>Certification List/ Hire Date</u>	<u>Total</u>
AB306	18.2	15.0	33.2
List available	80.7	72.0	152.7
No list	117.0	76.9	193.9
Pending exam	159.0	37.0	196.0

Source: Sample of Milwaukee County hires, January—June 2001, from DHR records.

Even when the department requests to appoint a named County employee to a position (AB306), the process takes more than one month. When a certified list is available, which should mean

**When a list is not available or when an exam is pending, the process takes more than six months.**

that the hiring department has a pool of candidates immediately available from which to draw, it takes more than five months. When a list is not available or when an exam is pending, the process takes more than six months.

Positions on continuous recruitment took an average of 145 calendar days, or about five months, to fill.

A 2000—2001 survey of government personnel departments conducted by the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) and the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) provides the following data.

- When a certified list is available, 69% of respondents are able to provide departments a list within six calendar days. Just 1% takes more than 60 calendar days when a list is available.
- When a list is not available, 69% of respondents are able to provide a list within 40 calendar days. Thirteen percent take more than 60 days when no list is available.

In the survey, certain factors were identified as best conditions for efficient hiring practices. These factors include the availability of decision-makers, the availability of candidates to finish pre-employment tests, if any, and the availability of candidates to begin work within two weeks.

- Under these best conditions, 69% can make a job offer within 18 days when a list is available, while just 1% takes more than 60 calendar days.
- Also under these best of conditions, 66% can make a job offer within 40 days, even when no list is available, while just 10% take more than 60 days.

**The Milwaukee County timeframe for hiring of five to six months far exceeds the governments in the survey.**

Because this IPMA/NASPE survey measure used the date of a job offer, while we used the date of official hire in our analysis, the timeframes are not directly comparable. However, even assuming an additional 30 days for a person to accept an offer

and start on the job, the Milwaukee County timeframe for hiring of five to six months far exceeds the governments in the survey.

### **Age of Certified Lists**

During interviews with operating departments, a common complaint was that the certified lists provided by DHR are too old. The departments generally indicated preferences for receiving lists that are no more than two years old, with some preferring lists no more than one year old.

To test the statements that old lists are not useful to departments, and to determine the impact of the outdated lists on the hiring process, we compiled a database of the disposition of 1,206 candidates from 101 certified lists. **Table 5** shows the distribution of the sample among the disposition codes.

<b>Table 5</b> <b>Disposition of Candidates</b> <b>From Sample of Certification Lists</b>		
<u>Code</u>	<u>Disposition</u>	<u>No. of Candidates</u>
APPT	Appointed	100
DINCT	Did not contact	157
NINT	Not interested	589
REPT	Reported for interview (not hired)	275
RERA	Refused appointment	9
UNCT	Unable to contact	76
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,206</b>
Source: Department of Audit prepared from DHR records.		

**Data indicates 252 of 1,206 (21%) candidates had been on the list more than three years.**

**Table 6** provides information on the length of time candidates were on a certification list prior to being referred to a hiring authority. For instance, data in **Table 6** indicates 252 of 1,206 (21%) candidates had been on the list more than three years. One person referred to a hiring authority had been on the list for 15 years and one month. That candidate was not interested in the position being filled.

**Table 6**  
**Length of Time on Certified List**  
**When Referred to Hiring Authority**

<u>Time on List</u>	<u>Number of Candidates</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
< 6 months	424	35.2
6 months to 1 year	188	15.6
1+ to 2 years	204	16.9
2+ to 3 years	138	11.4
3+ to 5 years	203	16.8
5+ to 10 years	32	2.7
10+ to 15+ years	17	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Prepared from DHR records.

**By analyzing the data we begin to see the diminishing efficiency of the hiring process as the lists get older.**

By analyzing the data in two different ways, we begin to see the diminishing efficiency of the hiring process as the lists get older.

In our first analysis, we calculated the percentage of names on certified lists that fell into each disposition code when the names were grouped according to the length of time they appeared on a list. **Chart 1** shows the results of this analysis.

**Chart 1**  
**Breakout of Applicants' Dispositions**

	<u>APPT</u>	<u>DNCT</u>	<u>NINT</u>	<u>REPT</u>	<u>RERA</u>	<u>UNCT</u>	<u>Total</u>
6 months or less	14.6%	10.8%	35.4%	38.2%	1.0%	0.0%	100
6 months to 1 year	8.5%	7.4%	56.9%	23.9%	1.1%	2.2%	100
1 – 2 years	6.4%	18.1%	49.0%	19.6%	1.0%	5.9%	100
2 – 3 years	2.9%	20.3%	54.3%	8.0%	0.7%	13.8%	100
3 – 5 years	2.5%	10.8%	65.5%	6.4%	0.0%	14.8%	100
5 – 10 years	0.0%	28.1%	40.6%	9.4%	0.0%	21.9%	100
10 – 15 years	0.0%	5.9%	64.7%	5.9%	0.0%	23.5%	100

**Key:**

APPT = Appointed  
 DNCT = Did not Contact  
 NINT = Not interested  
 REPT = Reported for interview (did not hire)  
 RERA = Refused appointment  
 UNCT = Unable to contact

Source: Department of Audit prepared from DHR records.

As shown in **Chart 1**, the percentage of candidates appointed (as a percentage of the total names on the lists for the time period) decreases steadily after six months on the list. In addition, as expected, those who were not interested (NINT) and those unable to be contacted (UNCT) increased over time. The largest increase in NINT occurred after six months, while the largest increase in UNCT occurred after the second year. This is indicative of a very inefficient process, and as the data in **Chart 1** shows, the process becomes less efficient as time goes by.

**Seventy-eight percent of all candidates that were eventually hired were hired within one year of their placement on a certified list.**

Looking at the same data in another fashion, as shown in **Chart 2**, we see that 78% of all the candidates in our sample that were eventually hired were hired within one year of their placement on a certified list. Further, 91% have been hired within two year of being placed on a certified list. The next two to five years account for the remaining 9%.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chart 2</b>  <b>Cumulative Percentage of Each Disposition Code Over Time</b></p>						
	<u>APPT</u>	<u>DNCT</u>	<u>NINT</u>	<u>REPT</u>	<u>RERA</u>	<u>UNCT</u>
6 months or less	62.0%	29.3%	25.5%	58.9%	44.4%	0.0%
6 months to 1 year	78.0%	38.2%	43.6%	75.3%	66.7%	5.3%
1 – 2 years	91.0%	61.8%	60.6%	89.8%	88.9%	21.1%
2 – 3 years	95.0%	79.6%	73.3%	93.8%	100.0%	46.1%
3 – 5 years	100.0%	93.6%	95.9%	98.5%	100.0%	85.5%
5 – 10 years	100.0%	99.4%	98.1%	99.6%	100.0%	94.7%
10 – 15 years	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
<p>Key:</p> <p>APPT = Appointed</p> <p>DNCT = Did not Contact</p> <p>NINT = Not interested</p> <p>REPT = Reported for interview (did not hire)</p> <p>RERA = Refused appointment</p> <p>UNCT = Unable to contact</p>						
<p>Source: Department of Audit prepared from DHR records.</p>						

Just as departments indicated, this data suggests that the usefulness of certified lists diminishes over time, with a rapid decline after the first year.

### Outdated Applications

One factor that contributes to the length of time necessary to fill Milwaukee County positions is the fact that certified lists often contain names of individuals who are no longer viable candidates. This is reflected in the data in **Charts 1 and 2**, which shows heavy percentages of candidates that cannot be contacted or are no longer interested in the positions being filled. Applicants are not allowed to update their applications even though their name may remain on an eligible list for more than ten years. During an extended period of time on a list, an applicant may have completed college or an advanced degree, obtained significant experience that pertains to the job requested, moved, is no longer interested in the job, or in some cases, may have died. When a certified list is provided to a hiring authority, there is limited prescreening information other

**Applicants are not allowed to update their applications even though their name may remain on an eligible list for more than ten years.**



than the applicant's name, address and phone number (at the time of application).

### **Test Results**

The results of our sample review clearly show an unacceptable timeframe exists for the filling of vacant positions in Milwaukee County government. Further review of data from certified lists indicate the age of the lists and outdated applicant information contribute to the lengthy hiring process. To begin identifying other specific reasons contributing to the length of the hiring process, we interviewed several major departments and surveyed most departments on an array of DHR activities. Our findings are presented in the remaining sections of this report.

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## Section 2: Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

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### Overview

As an internal service department, it is important that DHR assist its customers (i.e., other County departments) in meeting their needs and in achieving their strategic goals.

To gauge the level of customer satisfaction regarding the hiring process and other services provided by DHR, as well as to obtain insight into factors contributing to the lengthy hiring process identified in our sample review (see **Section 1**), we surveyed all major County departments. We distributed 56 surveys to department heads, administrators and human resource managers. County departments returned 49 surveys, an 88% response rate.

County departments returned 49 surveys, an 88% response rate.

The survey consisted of three major areas. Throughout the survey, the departments were asked to evaluate DHR’s overall performance using a five-point rating scale (with an additional score of ‘0’ indicating ‘Does Not Apply’), as shown in **Table 7**.

**Table 7**  
**Department of Audit**  
**DHR Customer Satisfaction Survey**  
**Rating Scale Key**

5 = Excellent	2 = Marginal
4 = Good	1 = Inadequate
3 = Adequate	0 = Does Not Apply

In addition to the numerical rating questions, the surveys included opportunities for respondents to provide narrative commentary. We also talked with representatives of seven departments or divisions, including both departments with human resource staff and departments too small to have staff assigned solely to human resource functions.

## Survey Results

Detailed results of the surveys are presented as **Exhibits 2, 3, and 4**. Following is a brief summary of the highlights of each survey area.

### Recruitment and Screening

All of the scores relating to recruitment and screening averaged around 3.0 ('adequate'). However, two areas in this section of the survey depart somewhat from this average score. Departments gave DHR an average rating of 3.3 for allowing agency input into hiring decisions. The lowest average scores of 2.3 and 2.4 (just above 'marginal') related to timeliness of filling vacant positions, which appears consistent with the timeframes of one to six months identified in our sample review of County hires in 2001.

**The lowest average scores of 2.3 and 2.4 (just above 'marginal') related to timeliness of filling vacant positions.**

Departments were provided the opportunity for written comments. Following are examples of complaints cited by respondents.

- Requests for certified lists need prompt replies.
- The recruiting and screening process is cumbersome and many good candidates are turned off by the length of time it takes to obtain a position. It takes too long to fill vacancies.
- The application process is very lengthy and in most cases, candidates do not respond due to the length of time that it takes to hire an individual.

Asked for suggestions to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of DHR's recruitment and screening practices, departments provided the following comments.

- DHR staff should be cross-trained, so that key steps in the process do not come to a halt when a specific person is on vacation.
- Reduce the age of certification lists and conduct tests more often.

- DHR should screen interviews and supply applications and resumes to departments, along with the certified lists. DHR should also perform reference checks.
- Abolish eligible lists that are two years old or older or automatically contact candidates whose names have been on the list for two years or more as to their interest.
- To recruit in today's job markets, DHR needs to review and evaluate the effectiveness of all policies, procedures and processes to validate, modify, and/or eliminate them.
- Train current analysts, or hire analysts with sufficient screening and selection knowledge and experience for positions. Increase staff to conduct exams, provide more money for advertisements, and have on-line applications. Allow a quicker hiring process.

**The expediency of hiring qualified candidates is extremely important to both the departments and the candidates.**

Recruitment and screening must be efficient to ensure that qualified individuals are hired in a timely manner. The expediency of hiring qualified candidates is extremely important to both the departments and the candidates. Departments responded that the hiring process for Milwaukee County is too cumbersome and many good candidates are turned off by the length of time it takes to obtain a position.

Departments have stated that the hiring process tends to stop when an individual in DHR goes on vacation. DHR should have adequate staffing and ensure employees are cross-trained in the areas of screening and recruiting because it is essential to the hiring process. Detailed notes, manuals, and procedures should be provided to help ensure that the hiring process is not hindered as a result of vacation coverage.

#### General Services

Our survey of departments included a section that addressed general services performed by DHR. While scores in this section of the survey were among the highest of the three sections, they also gravitate toward the 3.0 ('adequate') level. The highest average score (3.5) was in the area of opportunity for departmental input into the development of position descriptions.

The lowest average score of 2.8 reflects the departments' rating of the adequacy of DHR's policies and guidelines.

Following are examples of complaints about general services provided by DHR, as noted in written survey comments.

- It would be of benefit to have an easier way to remove candidates from eligibility. Sometimes after an interview it is apparent that the candidate was very creative in filling out the application. This is a factor in experience paper exams.
- I have had good success when contacting the Director or Deputy Director directly. This should not be the case. Not everything should have to be elevated to the Director or Deputy Director to get good responses.
- Too many decisions appear to be arbitrary. Little to no comments are given on the basis for decisions. Need to look for ways to get things done as opposed to simply saying you cannot do that.
- Staff is excellent, but lack responsiveness when any person is on vacation.
- DHR staff has a tendency to bypass departments' human resource staff and work directly with the department managers.

Examples of suggested improvements from departmental survey responses include the following.

**One suggested improvement is to advocate and initiate changes to Civil Service Rules, administrative procedures and other regulations that interfere with DHR's ability to be responsive to the needs of its customers.**

- Advocate and initiate changes to Civil Service Rules, administrative procedures and other regulations that would interfere with DHR's ability to be responsive to the needs of its customers.
- We need to look at other models of public sector human resources departments.
- Staff is excellent, but lacks responsiveness when anyone is on vacation. Some requests are delayed if the person who handles the task is not at work. Could be more cross training or a triage system for requests.

#### Customer Service

This section of our departmental survey contained both the highest and lowest average scores of any items on the survey.

**The lowest average score of 2.0 ('marginal') related to the time it takes to fill a newly created position.**

The highest average score of 3.8 (just below 'good'), was for the courtesy of the staff. The lowest average score of 2.0 ('marginal') related to the time it takes to fill a newly created position.

Following are examples of complaints about customer services provided by DHR, as noted in written survey comments.

- DHR has qualified staff. However, rules and regulations are a problem. It is difficult to convey a sense of urgency on positions that need to be filled quickly.
- There is a lack of communication between divisions within DHR.
- Need to review and evaluate all procedures to validate, modify or eliminate those that add no value to the internal process, or those of the customer agency.

Examples of suggested improvements from departmental survey responses include the following.

- Meet on a regular basis with personnel managers to discuss policies, procedures, and problem resolutions common to all.
- Allow departments to recruit and interview.
- Budget more resources for training managers on hiring process, evaluating employee performance, and conducting annual evaluation interviews.
- Review internal processes in order to identify and eliminate non-valued-added activities and tasks.
- Civil Service Rules and County General Ordinances related to DHR policies and procedures needs reviewing.
- There should be broader decision-making authority within DHR. There are too many decisions that only the Director can make. In addition, would like more advocacy from DHR within the Department of Administration.

### **Positive Comments about DHR**

Departments were asked to name one thing they would encourage DHR to continue to do because it is working for their department. Most indicated they would encourage DHR to

**Most departments indicated they would encourage DHR to continue to provide employment-related training opportunities.**

**One suggestion offered was to instill the philosophy that DHR exists to serve the needs of the operating departments.**

continue to provide employment-related training opportunities. This includes training for supervisors, managers, and employees. Communicating is also listed as one of the things that they would encourage DHR to continue.

### **Other Comments**

Departments were also asked what is the one thing that they would change regarding working with DHR. They offered the following suggestions for opportunities to make improvements.

- Increase information technology used in the hiring process.
- Departments should be able to fill vacancies before the incumbent leaves to facilitate training.
- Timeliness, it takes too long to accomplish any DHR transaction and overall have quicker response time.
- Decentralize some of the human resource services and processes.
- Instill the philosophy that DHR exists to serve the needs of the operating departments. They are here to provide a service.

### **Conclusions from Survey Results**

Taken in their entirety, results from our departmental surveys indicates recognition of individual courtesy and professionalism among DHR staff, but dissatisfaction with bottom-line results concerning meeting departments' hiring needs. From scores and comments, it appears departments are frustrated with a cumbersome process and a general focus on process over customer needs.

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## Section 3: Civil Service Reform Success Stories

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In light of recent turnover in the County Executive's Office and key administrative positions, Milwaukee County government as a whole is at a crossroads. The current budget crisis creates additional constraints on County services and pressure to reshape local government. Crisis is never the desired state of affairs, but when traditional solutions are not an option, innovative solutions must be found. As pointed out in the work described in this report, it is clear that DHR must make changes to improve its customer focus and help departments accomplish their business objectives.

Issues concerning the hiring of staff affect every department in the County. Because personnel issues such as recruitment, hiring and retention are intertwined with others such as compensation levels, promotional opportunities and benefits, to name a few, reforms concerning any particular personnel issue cannot be undertaken in a vacuum. All of these factors, as well as others, affect the decisions of candidates when choosing a job or career.

**The United States Senate asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to examine successful public and private sector organizations to identify 'lessons learned' in human capital management.**

### **The U.S General Accounting Office**

To improve performance in the face of steady or declining resources, organizations have made changes in the way they manage their employees. The United States Senate asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to examine successful public and private sector organizations to identify 'lessons learned' in human capital management and to analyze the applicability of these lessons to Civil Service reform.

GAO discerned the following common threads, as discussed in its report to the Senate, *Transforming the Civil Service: Building the Workforce of the Future*.



- Value people as assets rather than as costs.
- Emphasize mission, vision and organizational culture.
- Hold managers responsible for achieving results instead of imposing rigid, process-oriented rules and standards.
- Choose an organizational structure appropriate to the organization rather than trying to make 'one size fit all.'
- Instead of isolating the 'personnel function' organizationally, integrate human resources management into the mission of the organization.
- Treat continuous learning as an investment in success rather than as a cost to be minimized.
- Pursue an integrated, rather than an ad hoc, approach to information management.
- Provide sustained leadership that recognizes change as a permanent condition, not a one-time event.

Milwaukee County has already started to implement some of these ideas in the form of the strategic planning process that required departments to develop mission and vision statements. Departments articulated their impact on the community in the form of outcomes and developed ways to measure the success of their efforts in achieving those outcomes.

**Service departments, such as DHR, need to be flexible enough to work with departments to provide the services needed even if that means a different method for each department.**

Service departments, such as DHR, need to be flexible enough to work with departments to provide the services needed even if that means a different method for each department.

The larger departments we talked to want to do their own hiring, at least for some specialized positions. For instance, the Zoo and Parks Departments would like to hire their own seasonal workers. The Sheriff's Department would like to hire deputy sheriffs directly. Other departments also indicated their needs for specialized or technical positions could better be met through direct recruiting and hiring. These comments indicate the need for DHR to address the issue of being perceived as a barrier by

many departments, and focus efforts to become a partner in achieving departments' goals.

### **GAO Internal Reform**

GAO has undertaken a number of initiatives to better manage their own human capital for the present and for the future. Following are the guiding principles, as enumerated in *Human Capital--Taking Steps to Meet Current and Emerging Human Capital Challenges*.

- *Strategic planning, core values and organizational alignment.* Sound strategic planning and proper organizational alignment provide the essential context for making sensible, fact-based choices about designing, implementing and evaluating human capital approaches.
- *Tailoring human capital approaches.* Departments' varied missions, core values, and circumstances require custom-tailored approaches to managing people.
- *Employee involvement.* Regardless of the approach an agency takes to "people management"; the involvement of employees both directly and through their employee organizations will be crucial to success. As in many cases, in the human capital arena, how you do something is as important as what you do.

**Among the innovations adopted by GAO to accomplish its mission was to create more flexibility in recruiting and hiring.**

Among the innovations adopted by GAO to accomplish its mission was to create more flexibility in recruiting and hiring, pay-for-performance compensation rather than a number of steps to the top of the pay range, and annual promotions. They also identified further reforms that should be explored. Some of these items were also brought to our attention through the survey of County departments and our interviews with County managers, reinforcing the need for change within our system.

- *Critical occupations.* Additional innovations may be needed to recruit, retain and reward employees in critical occupations. Department staff we interviewed mentioned this issue. It was also mentioned in terms of minority recruitment and retention.

- *Recruiting funds.* To help attract and retain employees, funds should be available for selective recruitment. This also was mentioned in our interviews. Several departments said that they could not invite out of town candidates for interviews because there are no funds to pay the candidate's travel expenses. Again, this was brought up in the context of minority recruitment and hiring as well.
- *Professional development.* Departments are well aware of the value of training and complimented DHR for their training programs.
- *Cafeteria benefits.* An important part of a workplace that values its employees and recognizes the attractiveness of offering a diverse benefit package that provides employees with several different options from which to choose.
- *Fellowships.* To 'grow your own' employees from college students or others interested in hard-to-fill positions, such as deputy sheriffs, before they enter the job market. Employment may be guaranteed for successful completion. Department staff mentioned this as the only way they may be able to recruit for some difficult to fill positions and to recruit minority candidates.

### **Government Examples of Reforms in the Hiring Process**

The primary focus of this audit was Milwaukee County's hiring process. The most common complaint from Milwaukee County departments was that the hiring process takes too long. Our sample showed that the average time for processing is excessive. Our research indicates that there are a number of innovations that could reduce that time to a fraction of the current average. Following are examples of governments that have experienced the benefits of such innovations.

**Fairfax County can complete the entire hiring process, under the best conditions, in 10 days or less from the time the department requests a certified list to the date the new hire reports to work.**

***Fairfax County, Virginia.*** This county government can complete the entire hiring process, under the best conditions, in 10 days or less from the time the department requests a certified list to the date the new hire reports to work. They accomplished this in response to departments' requests to make the certification process more timely. They use continuous recruitment, weekly postings of open positions to hundreds of sites in the community and extensive use of technology.

Resumes are used instead of applications. Special software scans the resumes to identify skills, then creates a database of information. Analysts enter the skills needed by the hiring department and the computer prepares a list of candidates from the database.

**Maricopa County can complete the hiring process, from the request to fill a position to the new employee reporting for work, on average, in less than 25 days when a list of applicants is not available.**

***Maricopa County, Arizona.*** Maricopa County can complete the hiring process, from the request to fill a position to the new employee reporting for work, on average, in less than 25 days when a list of applicants is **not** available. The department has been monitoring the hiring process for over 20 years with the goal of reducing the overall time. They worked with their Merit Commission to change rules so that they could use shorter recruiting periods and allow managers to request the entire certified list if desired. Analysts visit their assigned departments regularly and are aware of the departments' future needs so that recruitment can start before the demand arises. They use technology to take applicants and disseminate openings. The use of checklist exams shortens the certification of eligibility process. One of the most important features is the continual monitoring of the system so that delays in the system are noted and addressed regularly.

***City of Shreveport, Louisiana.*** According to IPMA information, the city can make a job offer within two weeks of announcing a vacancy. The application period is five days; announcements are faxed or e-mailed to over 120 organizations as well as being posted on the web site every Monday. Based on hiring patterns, personnel staff can plan recruitments in advance.

***State of Wisconsin.*** The State can provide hiring managers with qualified candidates in less than 20 days, under the best conditions, when a list is **not** available. Improvements include changing state civil service laws to allow more flexibility, delegating decision-making to operating departments and

developing creative ways to assess job applicants. The State uses technology to announce positions, administer and score exams at walk-in exam centers, and update pools of certified applicants immediately. Hiring managers can request a list and receive a list of eligible candidates through a web-based system.

A brief review of the literature available from the International Personnel Management Association identifies the following key factors in quick turnarounds for steps within the hiring process.

**Heavy use of technology is a key factor in quick turnarounds for steps within the hiring process.**

- Short recruitment periods--five days only or continuous recruitment.
- High tech recruitment--all job openings are regularly sent via fax or e-mail to a large number of community sites. Also use cable TV job shows, job lines with recorded messages and web sites.
- Heavy use of technology--use technology to scan resumes and determine skills, use on-line applications, disseminate information regarding openings to a large number of outside organizations.
- Accept resumes and/or develop checklist applications. From this information, develop a 'skills inventory' database to match applicants' skills with departmental needs.
- Certification flexibility--the entire certified list can be provided to the hiring authority.
- Continual monitoring of hiring timeliness.

While timeliness is important, we must also balance speed with responsible hiring. Hiring decisions can prove costly in the long run if federal laws are violated or background checks are not thorough. It is also important to keep in mind affirmative action goals so that any reforms proposed do not unintentionally undermine attempts to diversify the workforce.

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## Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

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### Customer Focus

The language contained in a letter that accompanies all certified lists provides insight into the degree of customer focus presently exhibited within the human resources bureaucracy. This letter indicates that, depending on how candidates on the list are processed:

- “Name(s) will be held against the Appointing Authority.”
- “Name(s) will not be held against the Appointing Authority.”

This language is intended to make it clear to the appointing authority that entitlement to additional names will be dependent upon their recruitment from the provided list. This language conveys an adversarial role between DHR and the appointing authority and is not reflective of an internal service department dedicated to serving the interest of its customers.

**When its customers’ missions, business processes and needs are clearly understood, DHR can develop specific strategies to better provide value-added service.**

Milwaukee County government provides a wide variety of services to the public. Departmental needs vary; therefore, a tailored approach is required to best meet those diverse needs. Communicating with customers and meeting their special needs is an integral part of the success of any internal service department, including the Department of Human Resources. When its customers’ missions, business processes and needs are clearly understood, DHR can develop specific strategies to better provide value-added service.

It is essential that DHR develop a human resources strategy that attracts and retains qualified candidates in a competitive labor market and that is responsive to individual departments’ needs. Efficient, purposeful processes must be developed to facilitate this strategy and to replace the cumbersome hiring process

currently in place. It can be argued that departments, faced with an inefficient and time consuming civil service hiring process, will use every legal means available to 'work around' that process. This could explain what some observers consider an inappropriately high incidence of Temporary Appointments, Emergency Appointments, Temporary Appointments to a Higher classification and AB306's (Appointment of a Named County Employee). Once a human resources strategy is adopted, it has to be communicated and tailored to best serve the various departments.

### **Structural Reform**

In May 2002, the Department of Audit released a memo entitled *Management Structure Review—Department of Human Services*. In that document, we suggested that in the wake of shrinking resources, Milwaukee County government needs to restructure administrative services to make them more effective and efficient. This must involve not only rethinking the amount of resources devoted to administration, but also the approach used to deliver such services in the most economical and efficient manner.

**One concept for shrinking the bureaucracy is to have the 'overhead' functions, including human resources, centralized for accountability purposes but decentralized in the manner in which they are deployed.**

One concept for shrinking the bureaucracy is to have the 'overhead' functions such as accounting, budgeting, information technology, and ***including human resources***, centralized for accountability purposes but decentralized in the manner in which they are deployed. Under this model staff would work for a central administrative agency. The benefits of central accountability would be consistency, coordination, and certain economies of scale. The benefits of decentralized deployment would be empowerment of the overhead staff to make decisions and provide operating departments with the services that they need to achieve their mission.

**The bureaucracy must be a part of that service delivery, not an impediment and certainly not a self-perpetuating function that is unrelated to the core services of the County.**

During our face-to-face interviews, small departments, without human resources staff and with low turnover, told us that they wanted more DHR involvement. They indicated they do not have sufficient staff to dedicate to the human resources function. These smaller departments said that DHR should be doing more screening of certified lists, contacting applicants regularly to determine continued interest, and doing reference checking, among other things.

The larger departments, on the other hand, do not want to give up their human resources staff. They emphasized that these staff members do more than just hire new staff. Examples of other human resources duties performed by department staff included involvement in employee benefits administration, new employee orientation, and management of employee disciplinary actions.

We noted in our previous review that the success of this suggested approach is predicated on emphasizing *services* as the core mission of the central bureaucracy. We suggested it would be appropriate to highlight that point in the title of the agency, 'Department of Administrative Services.' The integration of the County's human resources function into this department would reinforce the dedication of one central focal point for departments. To succeed, the focus needs to shift from territorialism to cooperation in achieving the mission of the operating departments. Governments exist solely to provide services to constituents. The bureaucracy must be a part of that service delivery, not an impediment and certainly not a self-perpetuating function that is unrelated to the core services of the County.

We further noted that to be truly effective, this change must be more than a realignment of staffing. Rules and procedures will need to be simplified as well.



Finally, we noted that consolidation of administrative services could also provide an opportunity to effectively resolve ongoing concerns about the cross charge system used to budget and account for overhead costs.

Efforts are already underway to consider our previous recommendation to create an Administrative Services Division. To pursue the opportunity to improve customer service while achieving savings and efficiency, we recommend DHR:

1. *Work with the appropriate parties to restructure the manner in which human resource services are provided. This could be accomplished with the inclusion of the human resources function within a newly established Administrative Services Department.*

### **Procedural Reforms**

Based on our interviews and survey responses, departments are most concerned with areas of timeliness regarding DHR. It takes too long to accomplish human resource transactions, according to their statements and they want quicker response times. Departments particularly want to see a decrease in the time it takes for new certifications. The hiring process should be reevaluated to look at shorter versions of the application, and to create a separate application for promotional examination positions. Following are some specific areas in which procedural changes could increase the efficiency of the hiring process.

**Based on our interviews and survey responses, departments are most concerned with areas of timeliness regarding DHR.**

### **Certified Lists**

As noted in the **Background** section of this report, Civil Service Rules generally prevent departments from receiving more than ten certified candidates for a single vacancy, or more than two additional names for each additional vacant position.

The Civil Service Commission has approved waivers for departments to receive the entire list of eligible applicants at least three times. On five separate occasions, departments have

**Unless certification lists are current, departmental staff time is wasted contacting individuals no longer interested in the job.**

asked to increase the number of candidates certified to 15 names for the first vacancy and five additional names for each additional vacancy. All requests for waivers in the last five years have been approved.

As previously noted, initially limiting department's choices to ten is intended to ensure that the top scoring candidates have the first chance to be hired. However, unless certification lists are current, departmental staff time is wasted contacting individuals no longer interested in the job, or attempting to contact individuals using outdated phone numbers or mailing addresses. Additional time is also spent by both departmental and DHR staff, requesting and processing new lists with additional names. The cycle can be repeated several times (as many as nine in our sample review of 2001 hires) before a position is filled.

To provide departments with more names of eligible candidates and save time in getting those names to the departments, we recommend that DHR:

2. *Request that the Personnel Committee and the Civil Service Commission change Rule IV Section 1 (3)(a) and (4)(a) to allow all departments to receive all names on the certified list of eligible candidates.*

To improve the quality of the certified lists sent to departments and to make the hiring process more responsive to departments' needs, we recommend that DHR:

3. *Limit the length of time names stay on a certified list to two years or less.*

To make certified lists more useful to the hiring departments and to save time in the hiring process, we recommend that DHR:

4. *Require that applicants contact DHR at three-month intervals to express continued interest in a job and to update relevant application information. Candidates should be informed that failure to contact DHR at the required three-month intervals*

*would result in their being dropped from the certified list of eligible candidates.*

#### Training and Technical Assistance

Departments felt DHR's training classes were a valuable resource. In addition, several departments mentioned that they would like DHR to do more training regarding hiring. They would like to cover such topics as effective interviewing, what you can and cannot ask in an interview, and refresher courses on the various laws and regulations that govern hiring. They mentioned keeping up-to-date on changes in employment law as a concern that could be addressed through training from DHR.

Department staff is responsible for interviewing and hiring. To provide expertise and assistance in this area and help ensure that Milwaukee County is in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, we recommend that DHR:

- 5. Develop and provide training workshops for department staff responsible for hiring. DHR should also develop the capacity to render assistance to departments in conducting interviews and evaluations of candidates.*

#### Meeting with Departments

**Based on interviews with departments and from survey comments, there is a need for DHR to meet with departments at least once a year to discuss current practices, problems and solutions.**

Based on interviews with departments and from survey comments, there is a need for DHR to meet with departments at least once a year to discuss current practices, problems and solutions. Further, DHR would obtain input on future departmental needs.

So that both DHR and its customer departments may have a clear understanding of perceived problems, clarify any misunderstandings, and work toward the development of practical solutions and process improvements, we recommend that DHR:

6. *Meet at least annually with departments to discuss the hiring process and other areas of concern. These meetings should include high level managers from both parties to be an effective medium for change.*

A frequent complaint from departments related to the inability for human resource processes to continue due to the absence of a particular individual. To facilitate the hiring process, we recommend that DHR:

7. *Evaluate staffing/scheduling in the recruiting and screening areas to ensure that proper coverage is available. This may entail additional cross-training of staff to ensure proper coverage, particularly in the certification area.*

We also noted that DHR's policy and procedure manual does not address all aspects of the hiring process. For example, the manual does not describe the process for receiving certification requests or preparing the list of certified candidates.

An organization should maintain written policies and procedures so that all employees are following the same guidelines. It is also a useful tool in training new employees, cross-training employees for coverage purposes and may be a critical factor in an investigation or legal dispute.

Necessary procedures may not be followed as intended or may be done differently by each staff person involved. This could leave the County vulnerable to claims of differing treatment for certain applicants. We recommend that DHR:

8. *Prepare policy and procedures for all phases of the hiring process, including the certification request process and the preparation of the certified list. A date should be established for completion of the updates to the policy and procedure manual.*

**We found that there are no timeliness standards and that the various steps of the hiring process have not been measured.**

#### Standards for the Hiring Process

We interviewed DHR staff to determine if there are guidelines to evaluate the timeliness of the hiring process. We found that

there are no such standards and that the timeliness of various steps of the process has not been measured. We also reviewed DHR's policy and procedure manual to determine the steps needed to process a certification request and to produce a certified list. We wanted to determine compliance with these internal procedures but found that the policy and procedure manual did not address this component of the process.

Time standards should be specified so that everyone with responsibility for part of the process is aware of expected timeframes and can be held accountable for achieving them. Setting standards is one of the first steps in establishing accountability. To address the need for establishing standards, we recommend DHR:

9. *Set time standards for all phases of the hiring process as well as an overall standard for the process.*

**Once a standard for timeliness is established, DHR can begin to measure performance against the standard.**

Once a standard for timeliness is established, DHR can begin to measure performance against the standard. Despite having set a goal to improve timeliness, DHR does not monitor the timeliness of the hiring process. The 2002 Adopted Budget identifies a strategic target of reducing, by 25%, certification request/response turnaround time. To improve, and to demonstrate progress, the current condition has to be measured.

Therefore, we recommend that DHR:

10. *Begin monitoring the various sections of the hiring process to establish a baseline and to identify areas where improvements need to be made.*

#### Seasonal Hiring

The Parks and Zoo are extensive users of seasonal labor. Under current operating procedure, applications for seasonal Parks and Zoo Worker positions can be obtained, filled out, and left with the Parks or Zoo departments. These applications are collected and submitted to DHR where they are reviewed for

completeness and whether they meet minimum qualifications. For these non-competitive exams the minimum qualifications are being a Milwaukee County resident and meeting the age requirement to work.

No ranking is provided for those who meet the minimum qualifications. The applicant is given a score of 70 and all names are certified to the department. There is no need for proof of education or license. That responsibility for verifying information provided by applicants is placed on the department receiving the names.

The main function of DHR for the seasonal application is background checks. Past criminal activity is investigated if reported by the applicant. Criminal background checks are not done on all seasonal applicants, but only those who indicate a prior felony record on their application.

**Both Parks and Zoo staff praised the strides that have been made in the last few years to expedite the hiring process for seasonal employees.**

Both Parks and Zoo staff praised the strides that have been made in the last few years to expedite the hiring process for seasonal employees. Both departments emphasized the need to hire good candidates quickly, since the competition for summer employment can often make job offers immediately upon application. The number of potential seasonal workers who might be lost because they can obtain faster employment in the private sector is unknown, but both departments point out that this can and does occur.

Both departments felt that they could do a good job of hiring their own seasonal workers and that this would help them achieve their goals. One department said that if DHR wanted to make all of the rules, they would follow them.

To give the departments more control where time is a critical element and to determine if hiring can be decentralized in some circumstances, we recommend that DHR:

- 11. Work with the Parks and Zoo Departments to develop a pilot project that further reduces the involvement of DHR in hiring seasonal workers. Hiring guidelines should be established, with responsibilities and limitations for each party put in writing and reviewed periodically during the summer to determine what is working or what needs to be changed.*

#### Use of Technology - Electronic Communication

**Electronic communication enhancements are areas where DHR's customers believe improvements are needed.**

Electronic communication enhancements are areas where DHR's customers believe improvements are needed. They believe the hiring process can be expedited using electronic communication. Specific examples of areas where improvements could occur to benefit the users include the following.

- Communication in general. E-mail could be used to inform departments that a request was received or that someone will be on vacation and who to contact.
- Job announcement and/or job description modifications.
- On-line applications.
- Submitting requests to fill a vacant position and sending certified lists through e-mails.

Enhanced use of electronic communications provides the added benefit of documenting precise times that communications are sent and received, thus eliminating potential 'lost in the mail' arguments. DHR has made a number of recent electronic communication improvements with additional enhancements also being developed. To expedite the hiring process and facilitate communications between DHR and the customers, we recommend that DHR:

- 12. Further enhance the use of electronic communications between user departments and DHR.*

## **Audit Scope**

The primary objective of the audit was to determine if the DHR hiring process is meeting the needs of its customers (both applicants and County departments). The audit was conducted with standards set forth in the United States General Accounting Office *Government Auditing Standards*, with the exception of the standard related to periodic peer review. It is anticipated that our next peer review will be conducted in 2003. We limited our review to the items specified in this Scope section. During the course of this audit we performed the following tasks.

- Interviewed managers and human resources staff in seven County departments.
- Sent a written survey to 56 managers and human resources staff in all County departments, compiled and analyzed results.
- Interviewed Department of Human Resources staff.
- Reviewed hiring files to determine timeliness of DHR's role in hiring.
- Reviewed certified lists and viable lists to determine disposition of applicants and length of time applicants remain on the list.
- Reviewed material available on the internet for best practices in government hiring.
- Contacted four other government units to discuss their innovations in hiring.
- Reviewed audits of hiring procedures in other jurisdictions.
- Reviewed literature, including literature from the U.S. General Accounting Office, regarding civil service reform.



**Department of Audit  
DHR Customer Satisfaction Survey  
Customer Evaluation of Recruitment and Screening**

Opportunities for department's input into the exam and recruitment process	3.3
Adequacy of screening for basic qualifications	3.0
Adequacy of advertising and job announcements	3.0
Quality of DHR testing and screening candidates	3.0
Number of qualified candidates referred by DHR	2.8
Quality of candidates referred by DHR	2.9
Timeliness of DHR recruiting and screening practices	2.3
Timeliness of DHR recruiting seasonal employees	3.0
Timeliness of DHR recruiting non-seasonal employees	2.4
Perception of new hires regarding County's screening and hiring practices	2.6
Overall effectiveness of DHR recruiting and screening practices	2.7
Overall efficiency of DHR recruiting and screening practices	2.7
<b>Overall recruiting and screening rating</b>	<b>2.8</b>

Rating Scale Key

5 = Excellent  
4 = Good  
3 = Adequate

2 = Marginal  
1 = Inadequate  
0 = Does Not Apply

**Department of Audit  
DHR Customer Satisfaction Survey  
Customer Evaluation of General Services Provided by DHR**

Adequacy of DHR policies and guidelines	2.8
Coordination with department and DHR staff	3.4
Consistency of DHR decisions with formal policies and practices	3.0
General expertise and responsiveness of management	3.4
General expertise and responsiveness of staff	3.4
Opportunities for input into personnel decisions such as test questions	3.2
Opportunities for input into DHR decisions regarding position descriptions	3.5
Opportunities for input into personnel decisions such as classifications	2.9
DHR assistance to management in exercising management rights	3.0
DHR assistance to employees in exercising employee rights	2.9
Overall effectiveness of DHR management	3.2
Overall efficiency of DHR management	3.1
<b>Overall General Services Rating</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Rating Scale Key

5 = Excellent  
4 = Good  
3 = Adequate

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0 = Does Not Apply

**Department of Audit  
DHR Customer Satisfaction Survey  
Evaluation of Customer Service Provided by DHR**

Ease of reaching staff for assistance and staff respond in a timely manner	3.5
Knowledge of DHR staff on hiring practices	3.6
Courtesy of DHR staff during the hiring process	3.8
Amount of time it takes to fill a newly created position	2.0
Normal amount of time it takes to fill a regular position	2.3
Training managers and department HR staff regarding DHR hiring practices	2.9
Setting expectations on department Affirmative Action goals and information	3.4
Communications on the status of certification request	2.8
Meeting the business needs and objectives of your department	2.7
The quality of certification lists that are received from DHR	2.6
Overall effectiveness and efficiency of DHR's customer service practices	3.0
How would you rate your overall satisfaction with DHR	2.9
<b>Overall Customer Services Rating</b>	<b>3.0</b>

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